

SUMMARY OF GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
CASES ON GIFTS AND MEMENTOS

APPROPRIATED FUNDS: INCENTIVE AWARDS

B-271511: Agency can give employees food or food vouchers as a non-monetary award under the Government Employees' Incentive Awards Act. Agency must comply with awards regulations and make certain determinations as discussed further in the case.

B-257488: Agency can purchase and distribute mugs and pens to employees under the Government Employees' Incentive Awards Act. Agency must comply with awards regulations.

B-256399: Agency can purchase and distribute tickets to local sporting events or amusement parks to employees under the Government Employees' Incentive Awards Act. Agency must comply with awards regulations.

B-243025: Agency can purchase jackets for employees pursuant to the Government Employees' Incentive Awards Act. Agency must comply with awards regulations.

B-247687: Agency can purchase and distribute belt buckles to regional military winners of a military skills competition. (10 USC 1125) Agency must comply with awards regulations.

B-227559: Agency can purchase telephones of modest value as honorary awards for employees pursuant to the Government Employees Incentive Awards Act. Agency must comply with awards regulations.

Appropriated Funds: Direct Contribution To Authorized Mission ("Necessary Expense")
B.257488: Agency can purchase "No Red Tape" buttons for employees to wear during normal duty hours to serve as visible reminders of the agency's customer focus. The buttons had no intrinsic value and were designed solely to emphasize legitimate agency goals.

B-247686: Agency can purchase and distribute buttons and magnets, imprinted with information about air quality, to people attending a pollution prevention conference, where agency has an explicit statutory requirement to increase understanding of the environment and improve awareness of environmental problems among the broader public.

B-242391: Agency can make modest cash payments and/or provide baseball caps to fishermen who return "fish tags". Apparently, the fish tags give the agency important information about fish migration (an authorized agency mission), which information they could not get otherwise.

B-206273.2: Agency can purchase and distribute, on an occasional basis, free commemorative coins for promotional purposes, where the agency has statutory authority to market and sell coins (agency = U.S. Mint). Agency must also meet a three-part test to do this, as discussed in the case.

B-234241 and B-230062: Agency can purchase military recruiting posters to give away at a job conference - in order to attract potential military recruits to the agency's booth. Agency has statutory authority to conduct "intensive recruiting campaigns to obtain [military] enlistment."

B-211477: Agency chaplain's office can purchase and distribute modest calendars to military personnel and their families, where the calendar indicates religious service schedules. The chaplain's statutory mission includes notifying military members about religious services.

APPROPRIATED FUNDS: NO CONTRIBUTION OR INDIRECT CONTRIBUTION TO AUTHORIZED MISSION (PERSONAL GIFTS -- NOT "NECESSARY EXPENSE")

B-247563.3: Agency cannot purchase and distribute pens, folding scissors, or shoe laces for potential recruits. The items were favorable reminders of the agency and did not contain information which is not otherwise commonly available.

B-247563.3: Agency cannot purchase and distribute clothing patches for a local scouting group. The link to recruiting efforts was too attenuated.

B-247563.3: Agency cannot purchase and distribute restaurant vouchers and a silk plant in recognition of Women's Equality Week.

B-247563.3: Agency cannot purchase and distribute t-shirts to employees who participate in a local athletic event. Agency cannot pay a sponsorship fee to the athletic event.

B-260260: Agency cannot purchase and distribute baseball caps for potential recruits. Agency claimed that the caps, which had "DOE -- Valuing Diversity" printed on them, helped them to recruit a diverse workforce. The GAO disagreed. They concluded that the caps were personal gifts, because the link between the caps and a recruiting a diverse workforce was tenuous.

B-223608: Agency cannot purchase ice scrapers imprinted with the safety slogan, "Please Don't Drink and Drive".

B-257488: Agency cannot purchase and distribute mugs and pens for conference attendees -- as a pleasant reminder of the conference.

B-240001: Agency cannot purchase and distribute Combined Federal Campaign T-shirts. The agency argued that the t-shirts were incentive awards pursuant to the Government Employees Incentive Award Act; however, awards regulations do not permit recognizing an employee's CFC contributions.

B-201488: Agency cannot purchase and distribute winter caps to volunteers in a weather observation program. The purpose of the caps was to create esprit de corps among the volunteers, to increase their motivation, and to encourage them to continue volunteering for the program.

B-195896: Agency cannot purchase and distribute commemorative photographs to thank visiting dignitaries for participating in an agency dedication ceremony.

B-195247: Agency cannot purchase and distribute jackets and sweaters to job corps participants. The purpose of the items was to increase morale for those participants who could not return home for Christmas.

B-192423: Agency cannot purchase and distribute "Sun Day" buttons to the public in order to advertise the agency's commitment to energy conservation.

B-191155: Agency cannot purchase and distribute small plastic garbage cans filled with candy shaped like solid waste -- in order to generate conversation about the Resource Recovery Conservation Act.

B-184306: Agency cannot purchase and distribute marble paperweights and walnut plaques to recognize individuals' support for the agency (i.e., to enhance community relations).

B-182629: Agency cannot purchase and distribute decorative key chains in order to enhance favorable relations between the agency and certain conference attendees.

B-175434: Agency cannot purchase and distribute decorative ash trays in order to generate conversation about the agency and to remind conference participants about the agency and conference goals.

B-151668 (1970): Agency cannot purchase and distribute boots, gloves, paperweights, gift boxes of convenience foods, or agricultural research products to visiting dignitaries in order to enhance foreign and domestic relations.

B-151668 (1963): Agency cannot purchase and distribute cuff links and bracelets.